

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

November 12, 2019

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer:

Children succeed when they are provided with the safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments necessary for healthy development. Creating conditions for healthy child development requires policy and practice solutions to minimize parental stress and build community capacity to support families in a meaningful way.

As chief executive officers of organizations dedicated to helping children and families thrive, and as organizations providing evidence-based and research informed programs that are at the forefront of delivering services to strengthen families, we urge you to prioritize the reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and maintain the House increase of \$90 million for CAPTA State Grants and \$75 million for the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grants in FY 2020.

In the United States, the total lifetime economic burden associated with child abuse and neglect is approximately \$2 trillion, rivaling the cost of other high-profile public health crises, such as stroke and type 2 diabetes. Child abuse and neglect affect more than one million children annually—at least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse and/or neglect in the past year.

Exposure to violence early in life can heighten the risk for adverse or high risk behavior later on, such as smoking, alcoholism, and substance use and addiction, mental health disorders, homelessness, early pregnancy, and criminal behavior. In fact, studies also demonstrate that dramatic increases in juvenile arrests (59%), adult criminal behavior (28%), and violent crime (30%), often are a result of child abuse and/or neglect.

Children who grow up in safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments have the best opportunity to become educated, productive, healthy and engaged citizens into adulthood. CBCAP exemplifies the best in local, voluntary, research-based policy with proven outcomes for children and families.

CBCAP is locally operated and provides funding for programs and services that build assets for two generations (parents and children). It also requires states to collaborate across agencies and with community partners, while its evidentiary standard has provided the philanthropic community with a tremendous incentive to invest in and build upon proven interventions for children.

CAPTA helps children and families in all **50 states** through services such as evidence-based voluntary home visiting programs, community-based parent support programs, early childhood and child care programs, mental and substance use services, family resource centers, and respite and crisis care, among many other valuable resources.

Unfortunately, CAPTA has been chronically under-resourced and, as a result, the law has not lived up to its potential. Properly funding CAPTA is essential to reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect in this country and reducing the huge costs associated with treating its consequences. Largely due to the opioid crisis, the number of children in foster care has risen for five consecutive years.

We were pleased to see the House unanimously pass a strong bipartisan reauthorization bill in May. If appropriately funded, the reforms in the *Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act* will reduce child abuse and neglect, strengthen families through community driven solutions, improve local responses to child trauma, increase states' child safety tools, prevent child fatalities, and bring much improved data and transparency. In April, twenty-eight Senators joined a bipartisan letter calling on appropriators "to provide appropriate and robust resources to CAPTA." It is vital the Senate move forward with its reauthorization process so a bill can be finalized this session of Congress.

Jerry Milner, Commissioner of the Children's Bureau said, "We need to change the focus on child welfare to primary prevention of maltreatment and unnecessary removal of children from their families. We can only break the cycle of family disruption and maltreatment by addressing the root causes of those situations." Reauthorizing and increasing appropriations for CAPTA offers us a crucial opportunity to do just that.

We are united in asking Congress to swiftly reauthorize and maintain the House funding level increases for this important program with additional resources. Thank you for your commitment to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and to improving the lives of children and families in the United States.

Sincerely,



Susan Dreyfus, President & CEO
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities



Mark Del Monte, JD CEO/Executive Vice President
American Academy of Pediatrics



Dr. Janet Rosenzweig, Executive Director
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children



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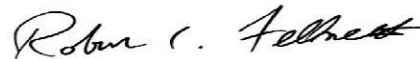
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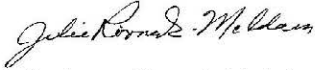
Christie Appelhanz, Executive Director
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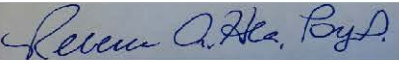
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Stephanie J. Hull, Ph.D., President & CEO
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Mary Pat Lee

Mary Pat Lee, Executive Director
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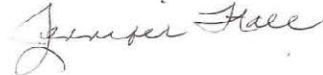
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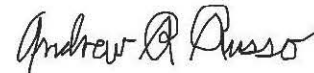
Jesse Hahnel, Executive Director
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Tara Perry, Chief Executive Officer
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ad Litem Association



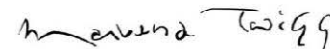
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National Respite Coalition



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Frank Daidone, Executive Director
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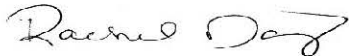
Dr. Melissa Merrick, President & CEO
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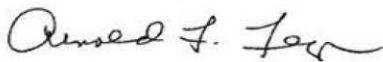
Jill Seyfred, Executive Director
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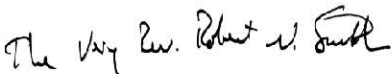
Rachel Davis, Executive Director
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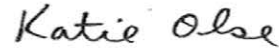
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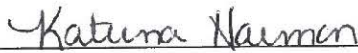
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ZERO TO THREE